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You don't have to be religious to understand the true meaning of the holidays. It's really just about good manners. Merry Christmas from everyone at Metro. XO!

Heartfelt advice from our etiquette expert Ellen Vanstone

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metro NEWS

Metro is not publishing on Christmas Day. Look for our Special Time Capsule edition on Dec. 28. We resume normal publication on Jan. 4.

Your essential daily news

Thursday, December 24, 2015

POLICE STATISTICS

Business break-ins, robberies on rise

Braeden Jones
Metro | Winnipeg

It was a typical year for crime in Winnipeg, with most types of crime the city keeps up-to-date data on holding consistent from this time last year.

The city saw a slight decline in homicides, 22 in 2015 compared to 27 in 2014, and there were as many shootings, 48 this year and 42 last year.

But the largest increase was in commercial robberies, up 39 per cent from 219 cases in 2014 to 305 in the past year.

Commercial break-ins also saw an increase, from 730 in 2014 to 885 since January.

Const. Eric Hofley said the Winnipeg Police Service will strive to get those numbers down the same way they were able to reduce vehicle thefts by 80 per cent from their peak between 2001 to 2008: smart policing initiatives and crime analysis.

"(We've) hired more crime analysts… by using those analysts, looking at crimes being reported, they can determine a pattern and investigators use that information to say 'this appears to be a hot spot… this is the time we should be deploying extra resources,'" Hofley explained.

He said commercial break-ins often have patterns and a data-centric approach would help find them more quickly.

"They're happening at night lots of times," he said, adding it's often in areas with low foot traffic. "Unfortunately the victims of these crimes are often convenience stores open 24 hours a day, and crimes are occurring in the dead of night."

> **These crimes are often convenience stories open 24 hours a day.**
> Const. Eric Hofley

Barry Tuckett, vice-chairman of the police board, said the strategy is supported in the Winnipeg Police Service Strategic Plan for 2015 to 2019.

The first plan developed jointly by the board and service recommends implementing a full smart policing initiative by 2019.

"The smart policing initiative is good," Tuckett said. "From everything we've seen it works."

305

Number of commercial robberies in 2015, a 39-per-cent increase from 219 in 2014.

885

Number of commercial break-ins in 2015, a 21-per-cent increase from 730 in 2014.

What ice castle would be complete without an ice bar? HANDOUT PHOTO

Ice can be nice

WINTER PARK

Ambitious show to open in mid-January

Evan Matthews
For Metro | Winnipeg

If you're looking for a place to chill this winter, a 40-foot ice replica of the Manitoba Legislative Building is a good place to start.

The Great Ice Show, founded by partners Paul Kostas, Vivian Jiao and Andy Zhao, is expected to open in mid-January, weather permitting.

The group of hotel owners/entrepreneurs are flying in 40 ice sculptors from China to build the park.

"These are not small sculptures, not one-foot, not two-feet — these will be life-sized sculptures," said Zhao. "They're going to be interactive, and promote Winnipeg's culture."

Aside from the Golden boy, sculptors are set to create a 20-foot tall dinosaur and a 20-foot tall polar bear, among others — all of which will be filled with a total of 40,000 LED lights, and have ice slides available for tobogganing.

Focusing on human interaction, once the river freezes, bumper boats on the river will be added. For adults who aren't into slides and bumper cars, food and drink will be available at Winnipeg's first ice bar.

"This is partially inspired by the Harbin Ice Festival in China, at least on the technical side," said Zhao, who estimated that festival grossed $1 billion last year.

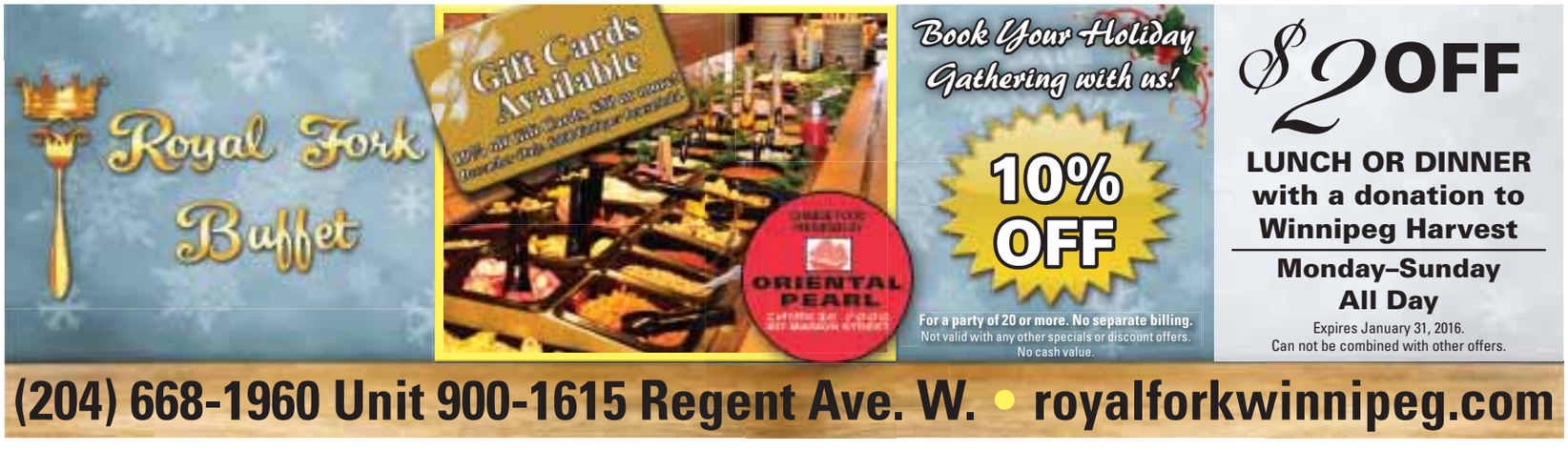
"We feel Winnipeg is a perfect location for a similar festival because of our latitude. We're a winter town, so it's time to be proud of our winter."

"The first year is a trial to see what response is like," said Kostas. "Once this is promoted we expect people from Minneapolis, North Dakota, etc. The second-year we'll see a financial impact."

The roughly three-acre park will be located on Parks Canada land, on the national historic site behind the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

TICKETS

Tickets for the festival are being sold through Ticketmaster, $25 for adults and $15 for kids one to 17. Kids under a year get in free.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GOVERNANCE

Indecision reigns ahead of election

Voters in this spring's provincial election will have a choice between a premier who has broken a key promise, an Opposition leader who has made some bizarre comments and a rookie Liberal hoping to leave the political wilderness.

NDP Premier Greg Selinger has tried to reverse public anger over a 2013 sales-tax increase so as to better his party's chances of extending its 16 years in government.

He had promised during the 2011 campaign there would be no increase, and the New Democrats dropped sharply in polls after the tax went up two years later. The government's efforts to convince voters that the money will be well spent on roads and other infrastructure projects have done nothing to budge the polls.

The Progressive Conservatives have risen marginally in the polls and have been portrayed by the NDP as hell-bent on spending cuts. The one-seat Liberal party has risen sharply, but with an untested leader at the helm, analysts say support is soft and could plummet before election day April 19.

The sense is voters don't yet know who they will choose.

Curtis Brown, a pollster who until recently worked at Probe Research in Winnipeg, said people who are expressing support for the Liberals are "looking for a home."

"They may be enticed to come back (to the NDP). They may even be encouraged to go all the way across and vote for the Conservatives."

PC Leader Brian Pallister has revamped a party that was demoralized after the last campaign — funding, membership ranks and party organization have all improved. But Pallister has also at times made headlines with strange comments.

> **It may be a choice between a party they don't like and a party they really don't like.**
>
> Royce Koop, political-science teacher at U of M

The Liberals are led by Rana Bokhari, who has never held elected office. The party received 7.5 per cent of the popular vote in the last election, but recent polls suggest party support has vaulted past the 20 per cent mark.

Bokhari has started releasing a list of election promises — including eliminating some surgery wait times and giving tens of millions of dollars to municipalities and students. But so far hasn't said how a Liberal government would pay for them.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Many Manitoba voters have not decided who they will vote for in the spring. CONTRIBUTED

Premier Greg Selinger says the NDP will be working during the campaign to restore voters' confidence. BRAEDEN JONES/METRO

Selinger seeks to regain your trust

NEW DEMOCRATS

Leader admits PST increase caught voters 'off-guard'

Stephanie Taylor
Metro | Winnipeg

When it comes to talking about raising the provincial sales tax, Manitoba's premier stops short of an apology.

It was April 2013 when Greg Selinger's New Democrats dropped the second budget of the party's fourth consecutive majority government — and in it contained a one per cent bump to the PST.

That switch from seven to eight per cent changed the winds of public opinion for the NDP and undermined Selinger's own credibility, after he previously dismissed the notion of a tax hike.

Coming up to an election year with polls consistently showing the NDP sitting dead last for voters' choice, Selinger admits he's been trying to make amends with Manitobans.

"We made a decision that was in the public interest from our perspective but we fully acknowledge that we caught Manitobans off-guard," he said during a year-end interview.

> **We don't have any plans for any other tax hikes ... (but) never say never.**
>
> Premier Greg Selinger

"It caused them to lose confidence and to be mistrustful, and we have to earn that back."

Earning back that confidence has come down to spending, he said, pointing to the money put toward infrastructure, education and job creation in budgets since.

"One of the things about any kind of reconciliation process, whether it's with government or indigenous people, is both sides have to come together and focus on what they share in common. That's why we focused on Manitobans' values."

With a little over four months until election day, Selinger knows the road ahead is long but time is running short.

"We would never say that we're peaking too early in this election," Selinger said.

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Winnipeg-raised comic Aisha Alfa is recording her debut comedy album at the Park Theatre on Dec. 28. CONTRIBUTED

Comic headed for big leagues

BACKSTAGE PASS

Aisha Alfa to record comedy album before moving to U.S.

Jared Story
Metro | Winnipeg

Go west, young woman.

Aisha Alfa is going to California. The Winnipeg-raised comedian and actor is making the move from Toronto to Los Angeles, but not before returning to her hometown for one night of hilarity.

Alfa is recording her debut comedy album at the Park Theatre next week. Born in Nigeria and raised in St. Vital, Alfa started her stand-up comedy career in the 'Peg in 2010, before relocating to T.O. in 2013.

"Winnipeg is a great place to start a lot of things," says Alfa, taking a break from packing boxes. "In Winnipeg you have direct access to people that are creating amazing things. Like, I played bocce ball with Guy Maddin. You just don't have those opportunities elsewhere.

"Also, being a woman who's not white, there aren't a lot of people who look like me in Winnipeg. I got the opportunity to be on set for things that would have been a harder route for me in a bigger market. I got to pad my resume and get really good really fast in Winnipeg."

In her two years in Toronto, Alfa managed to co-host MuchMusic's Video on Trial, appear on Degrassi: The Next Generation, study at The Second City, perform in the Just For Laughs Homegrown Comic Competition and join the cast of Air Farce. She will appear on Air Farce New Year's Eve, airing Dec. 31 at 8 p.m. on CBC.

Alfa has accomplished a lot in The Big Smoke and thinks it's time she took a shot at the big time. She says moving to America is a bit scary, but so was leaving Winnipeg.

"Jan Skene, one of my mentors in acting — we were talking about my career and she told me I had a choice to make," Alfa said.

"I could stay in Winnipeg and be Winnipeg famous, which would be my trajectory and be easy enough, or I could leave yesterday and go to Toronto. She said 'You've got your resume. If you want to go, why are you waiting?'

"Moving to Toronto opened up a lot of doors for me. You become a fish in a bigger pool. And now I'm moving to the ocean."

WHERE, WHEN

Aisha Alfa performs two shows at the Park Theatre on Mon., Dec. 28. The early show starts at 6:30 p.m. and is hosted by Dana Smith and features guests Jordan Welwood and Dan Glasswick. The late show starts at 9 p.m. and is hosted by Ryan Ash and features guests Ben Walker and Lara Rae. Tickets are $10 and are available at the Park Theatre, Music Trader and Ticketfly.

MYSTERY

Thief gives back stolen Christmas lights

The mystery of a Winnipeg woman's stolen Christmas lights has been solved, but another mystery has emerged with their return — why did the thief take them in the first place?

Darlene Gieger says an expensive laser light was swiped from her Christmas display and when she went through her home surveillance video she saw a man emerge from what looked like a taxi.

She says he got a lighter and burned off the zip ties that were securing the light, then tip-toed out of the yard.

After Geiger's daughter posted the story online, it sparked outrage from community members.

Apparently shamed, the thief was caught on video returning the light early Wednesday morning, along with a note of apology.

> **"I won't be putting it out right away, until I can figure out how to secure it properly.**
> Darlene Gieger on her plans for the recently returned light

It said "sorry for the inconvenience," wished Geiger a Merry Christmas and told her the theft was "not for the purpose you think."

Geiger had reported the theft to police and considered pressing charges but said she won't bother now.

As for what to do with the returned light, Geiger hasn't quite made a decision.

"I won't be putting it out right away, until I can figure out how to secure it properly." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Police museum's curator OK with delayed opening

HISTORY

Failed 1971 hovercraft to be featured in the new space

Braeden Jones
Metro | Winnipeg

Jack Templeman said he is excited for people to be able to see more of the police museum's archives when it re-opens in its larger space this summer, especially large items like the hovercraft. BRAEDEN JONES/ METRO

The new police headquarters is nearly two years overdue and still won't open until June or July, but that suits the Police Museum and Historical Society just fine.

"It gives us a chance to set things up and adjust here and there," said retired staff Sergeant Jack Templeman, the museum's part-time curator. "The nice thing is we don't have to rush right now."

He said most things have already been moved from the old museum location at the WPS training academy to the new one flanking the downtown headquarters lobby, but having extra time to spend on displaying items works for him.

"We're in the thousands of individual pieces, from the smallest things like a badge to a big vehicle, and there's going to be a lot more," he said.

The new space is about three times the size of the old museum, and the vehicles Templeman mentioned are new to the display, including a 1971 hovercraft.

"It was intended for water rescue in the fall and spring when ice was breaking up," he said. "Unfortunately it wasn't heavy-duty enough."

The craft took two officers to operate, and had a capacity for just 400 pounds, leaving little room for a rescued passenger, and its motors were too weak to climb the steep banks of Winnipeg's rivers.

It was returned to the North American dealer of the failed vehicle — which sold just three in Manitoba — with a report detailing those issues, and it spent the next couple of decades travelling and changing hands between collectors before Templeman tracked it down in a compound with wrecked cars.

"I went up and down the lanes and found it and the beauty of it is the serial number on the fins is our serial number," he said, adding only a few exist worldwide in various stages of repair, and the one in his display has been restored to complete working order.

The museum will be curated digitally for the first time in the new headquarters, with items including the police service's first robot, the first radio to be put in a police car, a bomb retrieval truck, old uniforms, personal artifacts from seven of its former chiefs and there are new items being tracked down and donated all of the time.

"By the time we do officially open, it should be in really good shape," Templeman said.

> **"It was intended for water rescue in the fall and spring when ice was breaking up ... Unfortunately it wasn't heavy-duty enough.**
> Jack Templeman, museum's part-time curator

A 1986 prototype dress uniform, one of many such uniforms on display in the new space. BRAEDEN JONES/METRO

CRIME BEAT

Marijuana plants seized in West End grow-op bust

Two men are facing multiple charges after Winnipeg police brought down a major grow-op in the West End on Tuesday.

The WPS grow operations unit raided the 800 block of Burnell St., where they found 221 marijuana plants with an estimated street value of $247,540, equipment valued at $7,565, and $930 cash.

Cst. Eric Hofley said larger busts sometimes net upwards of 1,000 plants, but this one was "fairly substantial."

The two men, aged 47 and 42, face charges of production and possession of cannabis for the purpose of trafficking.

The 42-year-old suspect faces an additional charge of possession of money obtained through crime.

BRAEDEN JONES/METRO

Police investigate two robberies, assaults

Police in Winnipeg are investigating two robberies, one of which sent two men to hospital.

Police say emergency crews responded to a home in the 1100 block of Beauty Avenue on Monday around 9 p.m. Two men were found suffering from stab wounds and taken to hospital, one in critical condition.

Last Friday, police were called to the 500 block of Home Street shortly before 7 a.m. The victim said he was travelling on Home Street when a vehicle blocked his way. He said two men got out of their vehicle and hit him in the upper body before driving off with his car.

The suspect's original vehicle is described as a dark coloured SUV or van.

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Family asking for help

GOVERNMENT

Son dealing with feds after father dies in Mexican prison

The family of a Manitoba man who died in Mexico while serving a prison sentence in the country is asking the Canadian government for help dealing with the situation.

Bruce Vigfusson died in a hospital on Monday in the northwestern Mexican city of Hermosillo, but his family only learned of his passing through a phone call from a prison inmate.

"We were actually the ones to tell the embassy that he passed away. Something is out of line there," Vigfusson's son, Colt, told The Canadian Press on Wednesday. "It's very stressful that there's not a Canadian helping us. This guy was born in Canada, raised in Canada and our Canadian government can't help him?"

Bruce Vigfusson was working in the mining industry in Mexico before his arrest in September 2012.

Bruce Vigfusson died in a Mexican prison on Monday. CHANGE.ORG

He was charged with assault — and later convicted — following a home invasion in which he allegedly attacked a thief, his son said. During the home invasion, Vigfusson's son said his father wrestled a crowbar out of a thief's hand and used it on the home invader.

"These Mexicans fled out saying they'd been beat so then he got charged with assault," his son said. "All of our family has been sending him money in the last three years in that prison to keep him alive."

Vigfusson's son last heard from his father on Saturday, when he left him a voicemail saying he was ailing.

"He could hardly talk," he said. "He just said 'I'm really sick Colt.'"

On Tuesday, an inmate who knew Vigfusson called the family and said the 45-year-old was dead, his son said.

Officials in Ottawa later told the family Vigfusson died from "a blood clot in the lung or a heart attack," his son said.

> **"This guy was born in Canada, raised in Canada and our Canadian government can't help him?"**
> Colt, Bruce Vigfusson's son

Vigfusson's son wants to bring his father's body back to Canada as soon as possible, but said he's not getting enough assistance from the federal government on the matter.

After speaking repeatedly with an official in Ottawa, he said he was told he had to go to Mexico to identify his father's body before it can be released.

"All he said was this is the first time a Canadian has died in a Mexican prison and they don't know how to handle it," Vigfusson's son said.

"To get him to a morgue and then back to Canada is going to be $6,000." THE CANADIAN PRESS

HEALTH

Manitoba updates organ donation rules

Manitobans who are waiting for an organ transplant are getting some good news.

Health Minister Sharon Blady says the province is making changes to increase the pool of donors.

Before this rule change only people declared brain dead with their heart still beating were able to donate.

That's less than two per cent of people who die in hospitals.

Now, patients who whose hearts stop beating and there's no chance of recovery can donate.

Blady says the change is expected to increase organ donations by up to 25 per cent.

Kidneys are the most common organs donated after a cardiac death.

Last December, the Canadian Institute for Health Information said only 10 per cent of eligible organs from deceased donors were actually transplanted into patients who need them in Manitoba. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Refugee deadline approaches

IMMIGRATION

8,000 Syrians in 8 days needed to meet federal target

Michael Woods
Metro | Ottawa

While many Canadians will soon be sleeping with visions of sugarplums dancing in their heads, hundreds of public servants are working around the clock in pursuit of the federal government's goal to bring 10,000 Syrian refugees here by Dec. 31.

More than 500 public servants — the bulk of them at Canadian government refugee processing centres in Amman, Jordan and Beirut, Lebanon — are working to identify, interview, screen and process the refugees before sending them on government flights bound for Toronto and Montreal.

"The people in the field are working incredibly hard and they've improved their techniques," Immigration Minister John McCallum said Wednesday, back from a visit to Jordan and Lebanon.

"This is something totally new. We've never done anything like this in our history at such speed," he added. "They are doing it as quickly as possible and over the days they are learning to do it smarter and more effectively."

Immigration Minister John McCallum says the government will have identified the 10,000 refugees who will be on Canadian soil in the coming months. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Many of the staff are Canadian Forces members there to help with medical screening and gathering biometric data, such as fingerprints, McCallum said. The two processing centres are now "powerful machines," especially on the medical screening front. Officials are processing 800 medical cases per day in Amman and Beirut combined, McCallum said.

Many staff are immigration department officials who are interviewing resettlement candidates. There are also Canada Border Services Agency officials, foreign affairs representatives, and embassy staff.

Many public servants have relocated from other posts abroad, McCallum said.

"I met people who have come literally from all over the world — from New York, from Hong Kong, from Mexico — to relocate temporarily in this region to help out on this process," he said.

According to the latest federal government numbers, by Wednesday night the government will have resettled 2,167 Syrian refugees in Canada since Nov. 4. Another 19,510 refugee resettlement applications are in progress.

McCallum said the government's goal is still to bring 10,000 refugees to Canada by the end of the year, but he couldn't guarantee it because there were only eight more days to bring some 8,000 refugees into the country.

He said the government will have granted permanent residency to 10,000 refugees, but didn't guarantee that they will all be on Canadian soil by year's end.

However, he said he's "very confident" the government will reach its ultimate goal of bringing 25,000 Syrian refugees here by the end of February. WITH FILES FROM THE CANADIAN PRESS

RELOCATION

'Moving heaven and earth'

The federal government may not meet its goal of bringing 10,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by the end of the year, Immigration Minister John McCallum said Wednesday.

"That certainly remains our target, we are working day and night to achieve it. But there are certain factors outside our control," McCallum told reporters during a briefing on the Syrian refugee effort.

Those factors include the weather, and refugees' potential unwillingness to leave on very short notice, McCallum said.

As of Monday, 1,869 Syrian refugees had arrived in Canada since Nov. 4. Another 300 were due to arrive in Montreal Wednesday evening. That means nearly 1,000 refugees per day would need to arrive in Canada between now and Dec. 31 to meet the government's target.

"We are moving heaven and earth to get them here as quickly as we can but to do it in a way that is correct and appropriate and takes due concern for security, medical and other issues," McCallum said. MICHAEL WOODS/METRO

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

'Good memories:' N.W.T. village said 'no' to residential school

Chief Louis Norwegian in 1952. THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

No, they said.

When officials came to collect children from Jean Marie River for residential school, residents of the remote village in the Northwest Territories said they would keep their kids at home.

In what may have been a unique decision among First Nations, they decided to build their own school. And now, as Canadians grapple with the legacy of residential schools, Jean Marie River is trying to commemorate the fact it doesn't have to. "Our community saw that it needed to do something different," said Chief Gladys Norwegian. "It was democracy at its finest."

Jean Marie River had about 70 people in 1950. That's about the same as now, but there were many more children back then.

That's what brought the government to town. Officials explained that kids would have to attend a residential school at Fort Simpson — a long journey by boat or dog team.

Norwegian's father Louis, who was chief, was torn.

"Dad really stressed on the importance of our beliefs and values," she recalled. "At the same time, (he) realized there's a dominant society out there, so he really believed we needed to know the ways of the white people for us to survive."

It was the mothers that made up his mind. "When he heard the mothers crying, echoing through the community ... he himself cried," said Norwegian. "To me, that was the driving force."

The chief began talking to officials about Jean Marie River getting its own school. But the options were residential schools or day schools attached to a hostel where kids could grab a few days worth of lessons while their parents were in the area to trade.

Not good enough, thought the chief. He had logs shipped and men pitched in and put up a schoolhouse. He made a deal with a anthropologists June Helm and Teresa Carterette, who were looking for a northern community to study.

Books and school materials were shipped from Alberta. Eventually, teachers came, too.

"It gave us a good, solid base as compared to people that went to residential schools that didn't have a nurturing mother, that didn't have a model of how to become a caring mother," Gladys Norwegian said.

"I think it helped me to become comfortable with who I am. I didn't really need to explain to anybody what being an aboriginal person means. I was comfortable in my skin."

"I just remember it with good memories," said Marilyn Hardisty, 61. THE CANADIAN PRESS

LEGISLATION

As feds prepare to legalize marijuana, many left in limbo

While Rose Miranda waits for her April court date to face potential charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking, the 65-year-old retired education assistant can't take cannabis for her arthritis.

Mounties have also banned her from visiting or contacting anyone at Phoenix Pain Management Society, the medical marijuana dispensary where she was volunteering when she was arrested in Nanaimo, B.C.

"I love Baby Trudeau, but he says, 'We're going to fix this.' When? Meanwhile, I have clients who don't have their medication," Miranda said.

"I take care of people who are housebound, people in wheelchairs and people who are poor. They need their medication and right now they can't access it."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has vowed to legalize and regulate marijuana but no timeline is in sight. Meantime, cannabis-related crimes continue to tie up police and court resources, leaving some feeling like they're in legal limbo.

Miranda began using medical marijuana about two years ago, after she said prescription drugs turned her brain into "mush." She began volunteering at Phoenix, primarily to educate seniors about cannabis as a pain-relief option.

Nanaimo RCMP raided three dispensaries, including Phoenix, on Dec. 1. Selling pot over the counter — whether medical or recreational — remains illegal in Canada, and Mounties sent warning letters weeks before executing search warrants.

"They came in like a SWAT team, guns out, 'Hands up!,' screaming, yelling, terrifying everybody who was in there," said Miranda.

> **"I feel very angry, but defiant, because I know I'm doing the right thing.**
> Rose Miranda

She said police body-searched everyone, including an elderly volunteer with a cane, before handcuffing them and taking them to jail. There, she said, she sat in a freezing cell wearing only a cotton shirt and pants for more than 10 hours.

Two days later, she said, she wound up in hospital with chest pains.

Const. Gary O'Brien of the Nanaimo RCMP said he couldn't comment directly on any dispensaries that were raided.

"I believe most of the scenes were videotaped, so if there's any evidence our police officers were (heavy-handed), that will certainly come out," he said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Rose Miranda THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Following Santa's sleigh gets technical

CHRISTMAS EVE

Hundreds of volunteers set to keep watch across globe

Peterson Air Force base is getting ready for its annual holiday mission — tracking Santa's storybook sleigh ride around the world.

The North American Aerospace Defence Command has been working for weeks to tackle the one-day mission.

Miles of wire, dozens of computers and 157 telephone lines will greet hundreds of volunteers Thursday, The Colorado Springs Gazette reported. Volunteers will be answering calls from an estimated 125,000 children around the globe looking for Santa's whereabouts.

"We keep adding stuff every year," said Staff Sgt. Kyle Kelly after he and a team of airmen taped down phone wires in the call centre Monday.

The call centre in a training building will be staffed for 23 hours and Christmas Eve. Volunteers will also share Santa's location on Facebook and Twitter. Last year, Santa got 1.6 million Facebook likes.

"We start in November," Kelly said. "We have to test every phone before we bring it in here."

NORAD's 60th year of tracking Santa involves more than the military. The program is underwritten by contractors who pay for the phones, the computers and the website.

First lady Michelle Obama is expected to volunteer, with calls forwarded to her on Christmas Eve.

Volunteers will field a growing number of calls from curious kids from outside the United States.

"We get a lot of calls from Europe, Australia and New Zealand," said NORAD's Stacey Knott, who has organized the Santa tracking for three years.

Bilingual volunteers handle the foreign-language inquiries.

On the bilingual front, NORAD, a partnership between the U.S. and Canada, has a distinct advantage.

"The great thing about having Canadian forces here is they can speak in French," Canadian Maj. Jennifer Stadnyk said.

NORAD is responsible for defending the skies and monitoring the sea approaches for both nations.

Its control room was originally inside Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs in a shelter designed to withstand a nuclear attack. The control room is now at Peterson Air Force Base, also in Colorado Springs.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDRES PLANA

FRANCE SECURITY TIGHTENED AMID HOLIDAY SEASON A French soldier patrols near a Santa Claus model, in a street in Nice, southeastern France, Wednesday. France's interior minister says the government will tighten security around Christmas, amid continued concerns about potential extremist violence after deadly attacks last month.

LIONEL CIRONNEAU/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW JERSEY

Panic over Elf on Shelf

AMAZON.COM

A New Jersey girl called 911 after she touched her Elf on the Shelf.

Police say seven-year-old Isabelle LaPeruta of Old Bridge was worried because, according to the popular children's book, the magic of Christmas goes away if the elf is touched.

WNBC-TV reports the girl told the 911 operator not to come to her house because she had meant to call her dad.

However, police are required to check 911 calls and an officer found the child in tears.

Her mother, Lynanne, says she awoke from a nap to find her daughter trying to shoo an officer out of the house. She says the girl panicked after the elf fell on the floor when she threw a ball.

The officer radioed headquarters: "Isabella apologized. She touched the Elf on a Shelf. She won't call 911 again."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Mining may go Uber way

INDUSTRY

Abitibi CEO wants to pull stodgy sector into new age

At 31, Ian Ball became one of the youngest mining company presidents on Bay Street at McEwen Mining, which operates in four countries. His boss was none other than legendary gold mining magnate Rob McEwen.

A year after being promoted to the top spot, Ball called up the CEO of Abitibi Royalties (Glenn Mullan) "and told him I wanted to replace him," jokes Ball. Today, at 34, Ball has that CEO job and is implementing the innovative ideas that got him there.

Ian Ball. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Last summer, under Ball's leadership, Abitibi launched "The Royalty Search", an online platform where struggling exploration companies and prospectors can submit a property for consideration to have their annual staking costs or property taxes paid for in exchange for a royalty.

Knowing that the mining industry works slowly as it moves from discovery to excavation, Ball insists the sector needs to refine its business model.

"Look at Uber and Airbnb," he says. "They both support market valuations equal or larger than the world's largest gold miners, but don't own anything. … At their heart, they are royalty companies getting a percentage of a sale. How do you bring that to mining?"

Ball figures his company's approach with the royalty search helps junior miners survive the ongoing bear market, and gives them a leg up on much bigger, established competitors in the same game.

"I have very clear goals for myself," says the Bowmanville, Ont., native. "One was to run a gold company, but when I left McEwen Mining I set out to build the best gold company in the world," he says quite seriously.

"That might seem like a boastful statement, but when measured by share price and performance, I don't think it is inconceivable considering the foundation we have at Abitibi Royalties. And I wanted to do something on my own, starting small in order to show people that nothing was given," says Ball.

Veteran mining analyst John Ing remembers when a keen and fresh-faced Ball began working with McEwen at Goldcorp in his early 20s.

"Robbie likes to hire young people who are unconstrained in their thinking about the mining business, and Ian was certainly one of them," recalls Ing of Maison Placements Canada Inc.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

ONLINE SECURITY HELLO KITTY FIRM SAYS LEAK PLUGGED Tourists ride on a sightseeing bus painted with a Hello Kitty character in Tokyo. Sanrio Co., the Japanese company that owns the Hello Kitty brand, said it has fixed a security leak on the SanrioTown.com fan site that compromised the personal information of 3.3 million users, including 186,261 minors. The leak was discovered on Saturday by a security researcher. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Apps cater to tardy shoppers

Procrastinators, rejoice. This year there are more apps and services than ever before to help last-minute shoppers.

Apps like Curbside deliver orders directly to the trunk of your car, more retailers are offering incentives to buy online and pick up in store, and Amazon Prime Now and other same-day delivery services have vastly expanded this year.

Retailers are adding incentives so more people choose "buy online, pick up in store" options. Macy's offered a $10 e-gift card on a purchase of $50 or more when an online order is picked up in store via coupon aggregator RetailMeNot. The option lets retailers save on expedited shipping costs and cuts down time for last-minute shoppers.

RetailMeNot's mobile app lets shoppers take advantage of last-minute deals in store too. The app uses a combination of GPS and Wi-Fi signals to pull deals from stores you are in or nearby when you opt in.

Those seeking deals on same-day delivery will find them, too. Shopify, which provides merchants with online checkout services, said its retailers were partnering with Uber to provide free same-day delivery.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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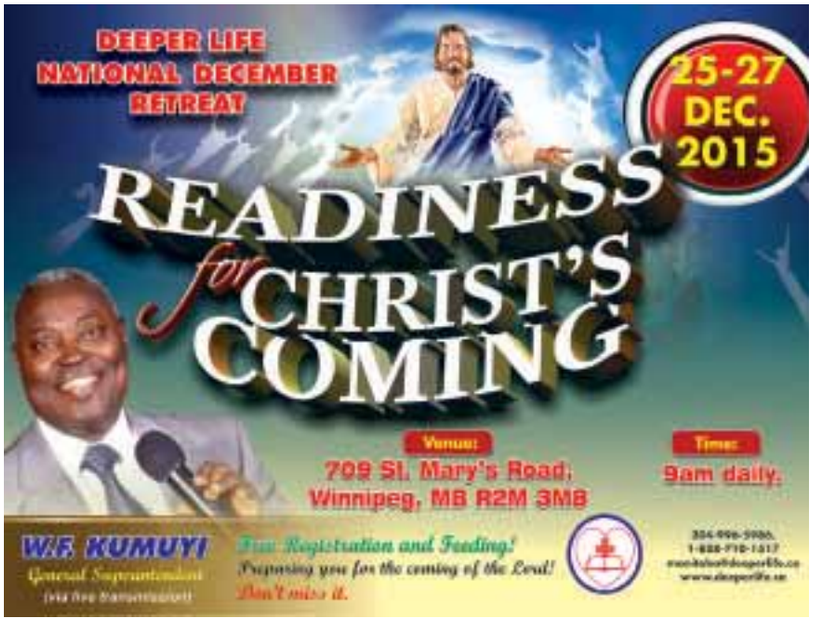

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Thursday, December 24, 2015

Sweetscience
For the perfect Christmas dinner, says Oxford University gastrophysicist Charles Michel, add a dollop of jam to your gravy.

Are you as smart as Metro's favourite feline philosopher?

Our resident snuggly scholar has collected snippets of the best holiday wisdom for you to ponder as you celebrate the season. See how many quips you can match to their authors. And have a meowy Christmas, happy holidays and a healthy and safe new year.

IF ALL THE YEAR WERE PLAYING HOLIDAYS, TO SPORT WOULD BE AS TEDIOUS AS WORK.
1
I FIND CHRISTMAS VERY DIFFICULT.
2
THERE IS NO PLACE MORE DELIGHTFUL THAN ONE'S OWN FIRESIDE.
6
A PERPETUAL HOLIDAY IS A GOOD DEFINITION OF HELL.
4
LET'S BE NAUGHTY AND SAVE SANTA THE TRIP.
3
REMEMBER THIS DECEMBER, THAT LOVE WEIGHS MORE THAN GOLD.
5
WIKIQUOTE
SHAKESPEARE
MORRISSEY
JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM BACON
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GARY ALLEN
CICERO
HAVE A VERY THOUGHTFUL HOLIDAY
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2. Morrissey
3. Gary Allen
4. George Bernard Shaw
5. Josephine Dodge Daskam Bacon
6. Cicero

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URBAN ETIQUETTE **ELLEN VANSTONE**

There you have it, folks: the biggest gift of all. The golden rule that JC expounded during his all-too-brief career as a motivational speaker and Messiah: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

You may or may not believe in Jesus Christ, but it's hard to argue the man didn't pull off one major miracle: He used a rudimentary form of social media that involved a scattered entourage jotting down tweets on vellum, but more than 2,000 years after his death, his birthday is still an event of global significance.

Admittedly, the manner in which his followers now celebrate the day might give him pause. Overspending on toys and gadgets. Committing the sin of gluttony for days on end. Pretending a fat guy from the North Pole uses levitating caribou to carry out billions of B&E's in one night via outdated home-heating systems. It's a strange way to honour the life of a poverty-stricken prophet who preached love and humility.

But far be it from me to judge.

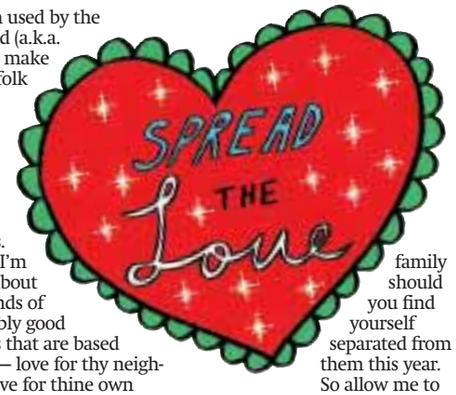
Because God knows I'd hate to be judged.

And there you have it, folks: the biggest gift of all. The golden rule that JC expounded during his all-too-brief career as a public motivational speaker and Messiah: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Which is pretty much what I've been saying for almost a year in this etiquette column. Not that I'm comparing myself to Jesus Christ. Obviously, that is not for me to say.

What I am saying is that the spirit of Christmas is based on the same principle that is at the core of good manners, i.e., putting the comfort and concerns of others ahead of your own.

These kinds of manners have nothing to do with etiquette per se — it's not about which fork to use with the escargots or how to address a peer should you be invited to brunch with the House of Lords. Those kinds of rules are too often used by the privileged (a.k.a. lucky) to make "lesser" folk feel bad and excluded, which is the opposite of good manners.



What I'm talking about is the kinds of impeccably good manners that are based in love — love for thy neighbours, love for thine own sense of being a decent, moral person.

What could be simpler, right? Be nice to everybody while everybody is also nice to you. If we all embraced it for just one single day, we'd instantly have another miracle: world peace. Good lord, it's so easy a child could understand it!

And yet … It's so hard! (And believe me, it's twice as hard for someone who writes a national etiquette column. The pressure in my personal life not to be a total jerk is considerable.)

It's also hard to buy into the baby-Jesus-peace-and-love message of Christmas when we're drowning in a sea of insidiously sentimental, tinsel-laden, bank-breaking exhortations to buy, buy, buy. Not to mention the stress of pretending to get along with everyone in your crazy family over turkey. Not to also mention the stress of desperately missing your crazy family should you find yourself separated from them this year.

The spirit of Christmas is based on the same principle that is at the core of good manners.

So allow me to suggest a gift-giving idea that anyone can afford, and is firmly on message with the season.

Why not give the gift of good manners, all year long?

Help wrangle a stroller onto the streetcar even when you're frantically late. Be more patient with frazzled store clerks, harried servers and amateur pedestrians who clog up sidewalks or stop dead at the tops of escalators. Talk to the oldest, loneliest person in the room at a party full of otherwise sexy, powerful dynamos. Listen — really listen — to the most annoying relative in your family. Drop your indifference to a neighbour/partner/co-worker you take utterly for granted, and let what they want and feel actually register in some non-judgmental corner of your brain (it may take some looking, but you'll find it).

I guarantee these small but genuinely heroic efforts will bring you a little closer to the peaceful, loving world we all crave, whether you're religious or not.

Good luck.

And Merry Christmas from everyone at Metro!

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MOVIES GOSSIP TELEVISION DIGITAL

Poulter 'pushed to the brink'

INTERVIEW

The Revenant actor finds chaos of shoot rewarding

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

British actor Will Poulter portrays legendary mountain man Jim Bridger in the epic frontier adventure The Revenant. CONTRIBUTED

Stories about The Revenant's rough and tumble shoot have already passed into legend. Harsh filming conditions — it was minus 40 degrees with windchill factor for much of the Alberta shoot — turned the outdoor revenge drama into what one crew member called "a living hell."

One of the film's stars says he was "confused and stressed" during the shoot, but wouldn't have had it any other way.

"It is something that I am only able to analyze and realize in hindsight," says English actor Will Poulter. "I spent the entire experience peppered with these moments of total confusion and emotional stress; in a turmoil. Now I realize that is what I needed to experience. I wouldn't have ever wanted to really gain control because then I wouldn't have been experiencing anything realistic or wouldn't have captured anything we needed. I'm glad for those moments."

The 22-year-old, hot off the success of The Maze Runner and We're the Millers, appears alongside Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hardy in the gritty vengeance drama about fur trapper Hugh Glass, a frontiersman who became a legend when he trekked across harsh country after being left for dead following a brutal bear attack. Poulter plays Jim Bridger, an inexperienced fur trapper caught in an impossible situation — torn between loyalty to Glass, his responsibility to his employers and his moral obligations.

> **It's an exploration of how much we can take as humans and what motivates us to endure these kinds of conditions.**
> Will Poulter on his latest film The Revenant

"On many occasions (director) Alejandro (Iñárritu) let me be because I was naturally confused and stressed by being pulled in many directions and not knowing what to do. He often thought the most appropriate thing to do was to allow me to be that. I would turn to him and say, 'I don't know what to do here,' and he would say, 'Why are we even having this conversation?' The character doesn't know what's going on, so why should I?"

The Revenant is the cinema of misery: a primal story that puts its characters through their paces.

"I think this movie is about the human spirit and I think what Alejandro strove to achieve was a film that explored what humans are able to endure and what is worth enduring in this kind of experience. Is it family? Is it money? Is it simply the will to live another day in an environment you love and feel safe in? It's an exploration of how much we can take as humans and what motivates us to endure these kinds of conditions."

Poulter says The Revenant is "an emotionally affecting experience," and adds, "there was no creating that without experiencing a lot of the hardships for real." The gruelling outdoor shoot took place on 12 different locations in three different countries including Canada, United States and Argentina from October 2014 to August 2015. Thinking about the shoot Poulter remembers the hard times with pride.

"The moments that stick out most for me are those moments where I felt I was pushed to the brink emotionally and physically but achieving the shot or getting the take. Ending the day was just unbelievable. There are a few of those days that stick out in my mind and that's why it was so rewarding. It's one thing to finish a hard day's (work) and pat one another on the back. It's another thing to finish a day you didn't actually think you could get through and then pat each other on the back."

THE REVENANT

Director wondered if DiCaprio could grow a beard

Alejandro G. Inarritu knew Leonardo DiCaprio would go to the ends of the earth to make the 19th century survival epic The Revenant exactly as the famously meticulous director wanted.

For Inarritu, DiCaprio was the best person to play Hugh Glass, a real-life fur trapper who survived a bear mauling and then went to find his mates who left him for dead in the unforgiving wilderness. Over the course of the nearly yearlong production, the Oscar-nominated actor and environmentalist proved his commitment over and over. He ate raw bison. He stripped naked in sub-zero temperatures. He even jumped into an icy river. But, early on, Inarritu had one very specific worry: Could DiCaprio grow a beard? "You cannot shoot this film with a fake beard. It would look terrible," Inarritu said in a recent interview. "Not every man grows so much hair in his face. That was a bet."

Thankfully for the director, DiCaprio sprouted a gnarly, unruly beard that becomes a symbol of where exactly his character is on his journey, and how deeply he's devolved. Makeup added dirt on a daily basis, and a combination of glycerin and grit gave his hair that unwashed, bloody look — the look of someone who'd survived a bear attack.

It's a minor thing, and perhaps the easiest test DiCaprio had to endure to make the sprawling epic, but it's one of those details that illustrate the overall production's commitment to authenticity. "It's a really primal story of man and the natural world," said DiCaprio in a recent phone interview. "It's almost biblical."

In an era of computer generated imagery and other post-production fixes, this was an unconventional shoot from the outset. Inarritu travelled with his crew to Calgary, Alberta and then to Argentina when the Canadian snow melted earlier than expected. As if shooting on location isn't hard enough, he and cinematographer Emmanuel "Chivo" Lubezki also opted to shoot only in natural light, giving the production a mere 90 minutes a day to achieve complex, highly choreographed long takes. The duo had done this before in Birdman, but never in the unpredictable wilderness.

But DiCaprio knew very well what he was signing up for.

"When you're out in the elements like this — and there are people who have much harder jobs than people making a movie — but you just appreciate the endurance of man and how we're able to adapt to circumstances," DiCaprio said. "You're signing on to find elements that will ultimately transform the narrative and find the poetry. ... It was all basically us really putting ourselves in this environment and seeing what happens."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Leonardo DiCaprio
CONTRIBUTED

Laughing on Wall Street

INTERVIEW

Anchorman director tackles the financial crisis

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Christian Bale stars in The Big Short, directed by Adam McKay. Even McKay's big, broad absurdist comedies have germs of subversive ideas embedded in them, but here the director confronts political ideas head-on in a hard-to-pin-down format. CONTRIBUTED

Adam McKay is best known for directing broad comedies with Will Ferrell like Anchorman and Step Brothers. But his new film, The Big Short, is a different beast.

It's the story of how four investment-bankers — played by Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Finn Wittrock and John Magaro — saw the devastating financial meltdown of 2007–10 coming when no one else did. It's a lighthearted look at a dire situation. Call it a dramedy.

"When I read this book it did everything I wanted to see in a movie," he says. "It was funny, it was tragic, and the characters were amazing. I think it was a case of running into one of the great books of the last 20 years that shows what is really going on in our modern world."

McKay knows how to milk a laugh out of a scene but he also knows that the level of understanding the viewer needs to get why the housing bubble burst is above the level of most MBAs.

"It's like 2 + 2 = fish," says one banker, expressing disbelief at the financial manipulations used by the big banks. In the film he takes pains to explain how Wall Street likes to use confusing terms to make you think only they can understand what they do.

"We wanted to be the first Wall Street movie that took you behind the curtain, that really said, All these confusing terms you hear, all the ways the banks make you feel stupid or bored ... it's actually not that hard. If the guy who did Step Brothers can understand it you can too.

"We were trying to show that this thing that half of Wall Street doesn't understand, these derivatives, mortgage backed securities, they're actually pretty easy.

"They bundled a bunch of mortgages, they sold them, made a ton of money. Then they ran out of good mortgages so they put crappy mortgages in and coerced the ratings agencies to give them AAA. That's it. That's the whole story."

McKay has an a-list cast but he didn't want to make the movie all about the stars.

"It would have been very easy to just do this character story and just show these guys being affected by it but I wanted this thing to bridge a gap. I think there is too much stuff in our society where people just think, 'Ahhh banking! It's boring. Politics! Who cares?' The truth is, this stuff is exciting, It's the language of power. Once you get hooked on it, it gets addictive."

The Big Short is a look at our recent past, but McKay warns this is not a historical drama or cautionary tale, rather it's very much a going concern.

"All the effects of this collapse are still completely in play. All the same questions are still in play and they fixed a few things but they didn't fix the main, weight bearing beam beams that caused this problem.

"So this is an active story right this second. That is one of the main reasons we made this movie, we want people to understand that. This isn't over."

WESTERN

The Hateful Eight

Director: Quentin Tarantino
Starring: Samuel L. Jackson, Kurt Russell

Set after the Civil War, a stagecoach hurtles through the wintry Wyoming landscape. The passengers, bounty hunter John Ruth and his fugitive Daisy Domergue, race towards the town of Red Rock.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 85% Audience: 98%

DRAMA

Concussion

Director: Peter Landesman
Starring: Will Smith, Gugu Mbatha-Raw

This dramatic thriller is based on the incredible true David vs. Goliath story of Dr. Bennet Omalu, the brilliant forensic neuropathologist who made the first discovery of CTE, and a sports-related brain trauma in a pro player who fought for the truth to be known.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 58% Audience: 95%

COMEDY

Daddy's Home

Director: Sean Anders
Starring: Will Ferrell, Mark Wahlberg

A mild-mannered radio executive strives to become the best stepdad to his wife's two children, but complications ensue when their freewheeling and freeloading real father arrives, forcing him to compete for the affection of the kids.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 32% Audience: 96%

DRAMA

Joy

Director: David O. Russell
Starring: Jennifer Lawrence, Robert DeNiro

This is the wild story of a family across four generations centered on the girl who becomes the woman who founds a business dynasty and becomes a matriarch in her own right.

ROTTEN TOMATOES™ SCORE
Critics: 63% Audience: 96%

SPONSORED CONTENT *HOLLYWOOD SUITE*

7 WAYS JUDD APATOW FIXED FUNNY

Judd Apatow is a millennial Renaissance man. As the director of movies like The 40-Year-Old Virgin and Knocked Up and the producer of such flicks as Superbad, Pineapple Express (above) and Anchorman, Apatow has used his voice to champion a new kind of storytelling in comedy. Here's how:

1. He launched the raunchy comedy. Hollywood execs in the 1990s kept most comedies broad — PG-13 fare aimed at teenage boys. The 40-Year-Old Virgin (2005) was an R-rated film that explored awkward middle age. And we were all the richer for it.

2. He built a bridge between the '90s and today. Apatow got his start working with Garry Shandling, Jim Carrey, Adam Sandler and Ben Stiller — stars that defined 1990s comedy.

3. He rejected the star system. In his own productions, Apatow is known for taking chances with unknown or under-appreciated talents, such as Seth Rogen, Melissa McCarthy and Steve Carell. After working with Carell on Anchorman (2004), he encouraged the Daily Show alumnus to write the story for The 40-Year-Old Virgin.

4. He plays well with others. Apatow encourages collaborative filmmaking, such as on-set improv, which in turn leads to some of the funniest outtakes in the biz.

5. He's a friend to the underdog. Apatow loves subcultures. From the sleepy stoners being chased by drug lords in Pineapple Express to the awkward high-school seniors facing separation anxiety in Superbad, he shows that even losers get lucky sometimes.

6. That's because the journey is half of the fun. In the Apatow-verse, side chatter and witty wordplay get as much airtime as action scenes and gags. It makes relationships between characters feel more real.

7. He knows women are funny. Apatow has provided a platform for strong female performers such as Catherine Keener in The 40-Year-Old Virgin and Leslie Mann in Funny People. He's also nurtured Lena Dunham (Girls), Amy Schumer (Trainwreck) and Kristen Wiig, who co-wrote one of his biggest hits, Bridesmaids.

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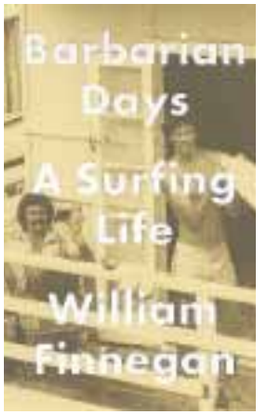
HOLLYWOODSUITE
70s movies 80s movies 90s movies 00s movies

STAR METRO Content Solutions

6 BOOKS TO ESCAPE THE HOLIDAYS WITH

As wonderful as Christmas can be, sometimes we all need a break from the yuletide cheer and books can provide the perfect escape. Here are a few recent titles worth checking out before ringing in 2016.

SUE CARTER/FOR METRO

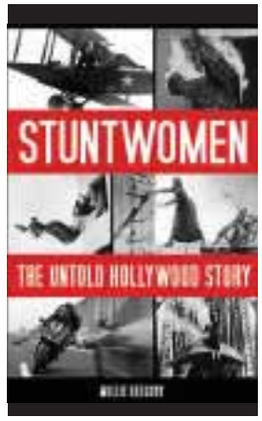


1 Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life

For those who dream of trading a white Christmas for sand and suntan lotion, William Finnegan's memoir Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life (Penguin) is as close as you'll get without dipping your toes in the ocean.

The longtime New Yorker writer shares stories from his life chasing the perfect waves in Hawaii and other exotic locales, providing landlubbers with insider observations of a cultish pursuit mastered by few.

It's rare that a sports memoir offers such breathtaking prose.



2 Stuntwomen: The Untold Hollywood Story

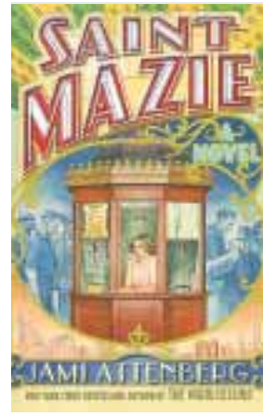
If surfing doesn't provide enough adrenaline to get you out of the turkey slump, there's Mollie Gregory's Stuntwomen: The Untold Hollywood Story (University Press of Kentucky). Gregory returns to the golden age of film, when women first kicked, leapt and drove their way through silent films.

Through 65 interviews with action doubles (including a sister team who have appeared in more than 160 movies), Gregory sheds feminist insight into these unacknowledged kick-butt heroes of cinema.

3 Canadian Pacific: The Golden Age of Travel

Anyone who travelled long distance over the holidays can attest to the fact that the experience has lost the glamour of yesteryear.

Barry Lane's photo-rich Canadian Pacific: The Golden Age of Travel (Goose Lane Editions) harkens back to when the transcontinental railway and its hotels stood for beauty, adventure and romance.

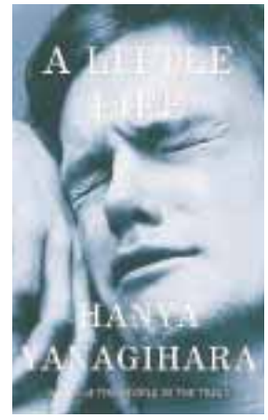


4 Saint Mazie

If you're looking for an escape from your family, spend some time with Jami Attenberg's funny, witty Saint Mazie (Grand Central Publishing).

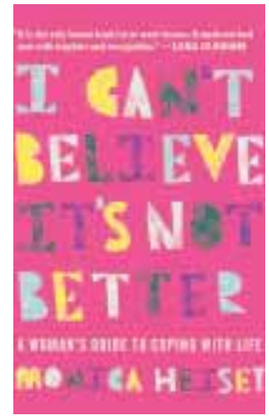
Inspired by the true story of wisecracking Mazie Phillips — think Dorothy Parker meets Mother Theresa — Attenberg brings to life the philanthropic theatre ticket-taker who lived in New York during the Depression.

No one writes larger-than-life, complicated but ultimately sympathetic female protagonists like Attenberg.



5 A Little Life

Sometimes when it comes to books, bigger is better (it can also signal to others that you're not to be disturbed.) If you're looking for a title with some weight — both in subject and length — there's Marlon James' Man Booker Prize–winning violent epic A Brief History of Seven Killings, about a fictional assassination of Bob Marley; Garth Hallberg's ode to 1970s New York, City on Fire; and Hanya Yanagihara's disturbing A Little Life, which follows the unlikely friendship between four college friends.



6 I Can't Believe it's Not Better

Before making any New Year's resolutions, check out Monica Heisey's funny I Can't Believe it's Not Better: A Woman's Guide to Coping With Life (Red Deer Press).

The Toronto comedian and writer eschews the inspirational self-help schlock for solid life advice, like how cry in public and eat in bed (a "Bed Buffet" of pasta or Fruit Loops is best enjoyed with Netflix, wearing a uniform of sweatpants and T-shirt).

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JOHANNA SCHNELLER **WHAT I'M WATCHING**

Telefilm so lame you can't even hate-watch

THE SHOW: A Christmas Melody (W/Hallmark)
THE MOMENT: The feel-bad point

Mariah Carey in A Christmas Melody. CONTRIBUTED

Melissa (Mariah Carey), the self-proclaimed "go-to mom for everyone in Silver Falls, Ohio," stands in the wings during an elementary school holiday pageant. She's wearing a snow-white cardigan and pearls. Her high ponytail and makeup are red-carpet-ready. Consumed with jealousy, she stares at someone on stage: the nine-year-old daughter of Kristen (Lacey Chabert).

Kristen was Melissa's arch-rival in high school, and she's recently moved back to town. Before the pageant, Kristen tut-tutted to Melissa, "Someone would have to be heartless to want to upstage a nine-year-old." As Carey tries valiantly to knit her brow we realize, someone is.

Can anyone feel good watching alleged-feel-good holiday telefilms like this one? If so, how?

Budget constraints force their actors to be driving through sunny October leaves one minute and pulling up in "snowy" December Ohio the next. Their dialogue is full of cheesy clunkers like, "You're this amazing wedding dress designer for Butler's department store!" and "You're never too old to believe in Christmas wishes." People must be hate-watching, right? Right???

I tried to liven things up by inventing a drinking game: If Carey ever changed position in her scenes, I would drink. But I stayed thirsty, because in every one, she stood stock-still and recited her dialog without even moving her head.

And when they referred to Kristen and Melissa's high school graduation in 1998 — even though Chabert was born in 1982 and Carey in 1970 — well, it just became a feel-sad movie, and I went to bed.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

HOLIDAY VIEWING

Perfectly sized binge watches

It's the holiday season and for many of us who have just a few days off, time is of the essence. Here are five top-shelf shows you can start and finish before you're back to work in 2016:

Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock. CONTRIBUTED

Sherlock
Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman are perfectly cast as Sherlock Holmes and sidekick Dr. Watson. Each of the three seasons currently available on Netflix have three episodes apiece, each no longer than 90 minutes. You can easily devour all of them in time to catch the newest episode, The Abominable Bride, premiering on PBS on New Year's Day. And prepare for a fourth season scheduled to air in 2017.

Peaky Blinders
This British production — starring Cillian Murphy, Sam Neill and Tom Hardy — is set in post-First-World-War Birmingham, England. It centres on the ambitions of a gangster family and a vicious police officer (Neill) bent on their destruction. With only six episodes in its first two seasons, the series will have you begging for more — and you'll be thankful a third season began filming in October.

F is for Family
This new animated series on Netflix is the brainchild of star standup comedian Bill Burr. It's a ribald look at a 1970s-era family that evokes elements of All in the Family and King of the Hill and adds liberal doses of expletives. And because the first season has only six half-hour episodes, it's almost a teaser for future seasons.

The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst
This six-episode true crime documentary first aired in February. Filmmaker Andrew Jarecki became intimately familiar with a notorious multimillionaire and New York City real estate heir, and by the time the series ends your jaw will be taking up temporary residence on the floor. Thehorrors inside Durst's mind will resonate in yours long after you've finished watching.

Black Mirror
If you're looking only to be cheery during the holidays, this BBC-produced show isn't for you. But if you're looking for a fascinating, disturbing, brilliant anthology series touching on technology, the future, satire and humanity's dark places, Black Mirror is right up your alley. Once you're done, you'll understand why Netflix has commissioned a third season (of 12 episodes!). There's nothing like it.

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5 POP CULTURE MOMENTS THAT MADE HEADLINES IN 2015

The worlds of celebrity and pop culture were filled with attention-grabbing moments over the course of 2015, and sometimes enough similar ones — like when doughnut debacles and bad pics take on a life of their own on the Internet — to constitute a troubling trend. Here's what got our attention this year.

NED EHRBAR METRO IN HOLLYWOOD

1 Justin Bieber makes a comeback

In 2014, Justin Bieber was Canada's most hated export. But this year, a pop-culture miracle occurred and he is back on top thanks to excessively apologizing and releasing some actually very good new music. Joining forces with Skrillex and Diplo, Bieber's song What Do You Mean? debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 — that, in addition to two other songs dominating the charts.

2 Taylor Swift's overstuffed squad

Taylor Swift hit the road this year for her 1989 tour and used it as a chance to prove to the world that she knows a lot — and we mean a lot — of famous people (seen here with Selena Gomez), with cameos onstage by the U.S. women's soccer team, Miranda Lambert and Justin Timberlake to name a few. But she wasn't impossible to say no to. Patrick Stewart and Ian McKellan were able to resist her charms. And honestly, Jennifer Lawrence and Amy Schumer dancing on Billy Joel's piano felt much more organic.

3 Amy Schumer's 'last f-able day'

Leave it to comedy's golden girl to bring together the mega-wattage of Tina Fey and Patricia Arquette to toast Julia Louis-Dreyfus' "last f—able day" in the Season 3 premiere of her Comedy Central show. Not only hilarious by nature, it threw astute shade at Hollywood's wild standards for women "of a certain age." Schumer returned the favour later this year, appearing in Fey and Amy Poehler's Bad Blood parody on Saturday Night Live. Double props.

4 The Ballad of Poot Lovato

As much as Demi Lovato might hate it, the fictitious mutant sister that her family has kept locked in the basement was having a major moment in 2015 — a moment that wouldn't end for the beleaguered singer, with Twitter Q&As and Instagram comment sections continually hijacked by snarky fans concerned about Poot's well-being. You can't fight the Internet, Demi.

5 Ariana Grande's doughnut debacle

One way to help make your bubbly young pop-star self seem more relatable? Showing you like to get stoned and skulk around donut shops, maybe even overstepping your bounds and taste-testing a pastry on the counter, as Ariana Grande did in a great moment caught on camera. Not so helpful? Declaring that you "hate America" after being chastised for your intoxicated behaviour.

OH WHAT FUN IT IS TO BE DONE.

HAPPY JOLLYDAYS

Find a glorious gift for everyone on your list at shoppersdrugmart.ca/jollydays

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Your essential daily news

LG's latest smart vacuum doubles as cleaning device and guard dog

NYE bar essentials

I'm sure this far into the holiday season you've seen your share of unorganized bar setups. Don't let your New Year's party be under scrutiny; hire a shirtless bartender and outfit your party with the best bar accessories.

Karl Lohnes
For Metro Canada

1 GLUCKSTEINHOME Trolley Styled Bar Cart
Keep the kitchen island clear and all your bar candy organized. $300, TheBay.com

2 Godinger Hammered Stainless Bar Set
All the materials you will need to show off your mixology skills. $80, BedBathAndBeyond.ca

3 Tom Dixon ARC Corkscrew Pull
Add some designer style to your wine bar. $88, HopsonGrace.com

4 Ralph Lauren 2-Piece Greenwich Double Old-Fashioned Glass Set
A good drink means serving it in a damn-good glass. $95, TheBay.com

5 Carter Muddler
Mash and muddle those garnishes for a truly handmade drink. $18, CrateAndBarrel.com

6 Crabbie's Ginger Beer
Reportedly, a big mainstay for this season's crafty bartenders. $3.60, CrabbiesGingerBeer.com

7 Tartan Crock-Pot Classic Slow Cooker
A great way to keep those hot toddies and ciders warm throughout the party. $28, Walmart.ca

8 Top Shelf Living Set of 9 Whiskey Stones
Let's not water down the issue — no need for ice cubes with these rocks around. $23, Walmart.ca

REAL ESTATE

What they're asking: Homes across Canada for $500K-$600K

What kind of a resale property can you get for $500,000 to $600,000? In this price range, you can certainly still buy a quality home in these cities. Metro looks at a variety of housing types across the country, from pre-construction and resale condos to single-family houses.

OUR CITY

ASKING PRICES WERE ACCURATE AT TIME OF PUBLISHING.

$509,900

Winnipeg

Here's a condo suite at the exclusive Edgewater building at 229 Wellington Cres. This corner sixth-floor unit offers city and river views. The kitchen with breakfast bar features espresso-stained maple cabinets, granite counters, tiled backsplash, tiled floors, gas cooktop, built-in oven and microwave, dishwasher and fridge. The master bedroom offers a walk-in closet and four-piece en suite with soaker tub. One parking stall and one storage locker are also offered. Listing agent Natasha Kouk is a sales representative with Royal LePage Dynamic Real Estate, 204-989-5000.

$597,451

Ottawa

Here's a great two-bedroom condo in the new Cathedral Hill condo tower in Centre Town. The suite has 974 square feet of living space with views of the Ottawa river from a private balcony. The condo boasts engineered hardwood finishes, quartz countertops and porcelain tile. Amenities include a concierge, party room, gym, sauna, dog-washing station and a workshop. Listing agent Irina Popova is a sales representative with Sutton Group Premier Realty, 613-567-1400.

$536,000

Calgary

For sale is this detached three-bedroom home that is loaded with upgraded features. The main floor offers a spacious great room with a gas fireplace, a good-size kitchen that features an island and walk-through pantry. The upper level features a four-piece bathroom, laundry, a spacious great room and three bedrooms. It's close to green spaces, shopping and transit. Listing agents Tim Lind and Richard Fleming are sales representatives for Re/Max Real Estate Mountainview, 403-247-5171.

metro SPORTS

'I think I was already sacked': Man United manager Louis van Gaal on reports that Jose Mourinho is in line for his job

Uncertainty under the tree for Jets devotees

VIEW FROM THE 300S

Andrew 'Hustler' Paterson

The Winnipeg Jets finished up the pre-Christmas portion of the NHL schedule with back to back lumps of coal for their efforts in losses to Edmonton and Calgary earlier this week.

After an 8-4-2 start to the season, the club enters the break in last place in the Central Division only three points out last place in the 30-team NHL.

Considering the way the team started the season, it's been shocking to see how things have gone in the last six weeks. The Jets have a league-worst 7-13-0 record in the last 20 games.

It was widely believed that the Jets would be competitive in the playoff race and have some clarity with the contract statuses of star players Andrew Ladd and Dustin Byfuglien. Neither has come to pass as of yet, leading to great uncertainly heading into 2016. The further the team drops in the playoff race, the more the conversation shifts to the future of Ladd, Buff and the 2016 draft.

Realistically much of this should have been expected. Replacing many useful veteran players with so much youth was a gamble in the short term, even if the decisions were made with the long term in mind. With Nic Petan and Adam Lowry in the AHL right now, almost no production to speak of from Alex Burmistrov and the fourth line featuring rookie Andrew Copp, the team hasn't been anywhere near as deep as it was when it qualified for the playoffs in April.

The influx of youth, terrible special teams, lack of commitment to team defence, goaltending issues and inconsistent team efforts have all conspired to push the Jets on the verge of a lost season.

Considering where this team is in the standings and the questions surrounding the future of the core of the team, the Jets season MVP needs to be GM Kevin Cheveldayoff. Regardless of what happens on the ice, the next few months will be critical for the Winnipeg Jets organization.

HOLDING YOU OVER FOR THE HOLIDAYS

If you are looking for some great sports action during the break, check out the annual Wesmen Classic hoops tourney at the U of W. The Metro News High School Classic begins on Dec. 27 and the Coca Cola University Classic gets going on Dec. 28. Highlights of the tournament include an expected crosstown clash between the U of W Wesmen and the U of M Bisons on Dec. 29.

Thanks for reading all year. I hope you all have a wonderful, safe and happy holiday season. Here's to better fortunes for our Jets, Bombers and Goldeyes in 2016!

The status of soon-to-be star free agents Andrew Ladd and Dustin Byfuglien is looming over the Jets at the holiday break. ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

IN BRIEF

Canada wobbles into WJC

Mitch Marner scored with less than four minutes to go to cap the scoring in a wild third period, and Canada edged Sweden 7-6 Wednesday in its last exhibition match before the world junior hockey championship.

Canada led 5-1 heading into the third, before Sweden lit up Canada goaltender Mason McDonald with five goals over the final 20 minutes.

Canada opens the tournament against the rival U.S. on Saturday. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Veterans return to rep red and white at Spengler Cup

Canada will have three returning players this year as it chases its first Spengler Cup championship since 2012.

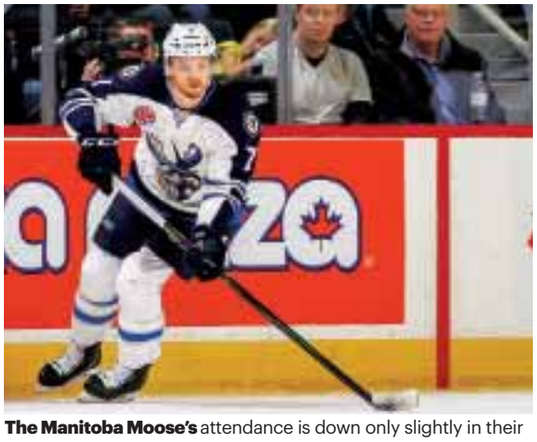
Goaltender Drew MacIntyre and forwards Alexandre Giroux and Chris DiDomenico were named to Canada's roster Wednesday. They were part of Canada's 2014 squad.

Beckham will miss crucial clash with Minnesota

Odell Beckham Jr. is going to have to serve his one-game suspension.

Hearing officer James Thrash on Wednesday upheld the suspension for multiple violations of safety-related playing rules after hearing an appeal by the New York Giants wide receiver earlier in the day.

Beckham will miss the game Sunday night at Minnesota. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



The Manitoba Moose's attendance is down only slightly in their return to town. TRUE NORTH/HANDOUT

ATTENDANCE

Jets' impact on Moose 'slight': True North

Evan Matthews
For Metro

The Winnipeg Jets are not impacting attendance at Manitoba Moose games as much as was expected, their owners say.

"Having the Jets in town hasn't actually impacted Moose attendance based on our expectation," said Dan Hursh, True North's VP of AHL Operations.

"Moose attendance has been really strong. There's been slight decrease (from 2010-11), but it's to be expected … with the Jets in the same market."

Through 12 games this season, the Moose are averaging attendance of 6,947. That number is good for eighth-highest in the AHL.

The Hershey Bears lead the league, while averaging of 9,011 after 13 games.

> **As a hockey fan and a university student, the price is ideal.**
> Winnipeg hockey fan Shane Moulton

"Moving the team back to Winnipeg was attractive from a hockey standpoint, but it still has to make sense from the business side of things," Hursh said.

"Logistically when the teams are at home, players are more accessible and it's easier on our management team to see guys playing more often."

Hursh said keeping the Moose in Winnipeg as a long-term option is contingent on having a solid fan base.

The Moose left Winnipeg after the 2010-11 season, and their average attendance that year was 8,378. The differential from then to now is a 1,322 drop.

Many season ticket holders agree with True North, and think comparing the Moose then and now is like apples to oranges.

"I think the difference between the Moose now and what they were symbolizes something completely different," said Shane Moulton, a Moose season ticket holder.

RECIPE Sweet Potato and Split Pea Soup

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

This simple, hearty soup is packed with as much nutrition as it is with comfort factor.

Ready in
Prep time: 1 hour 15 minutes
Serves 6

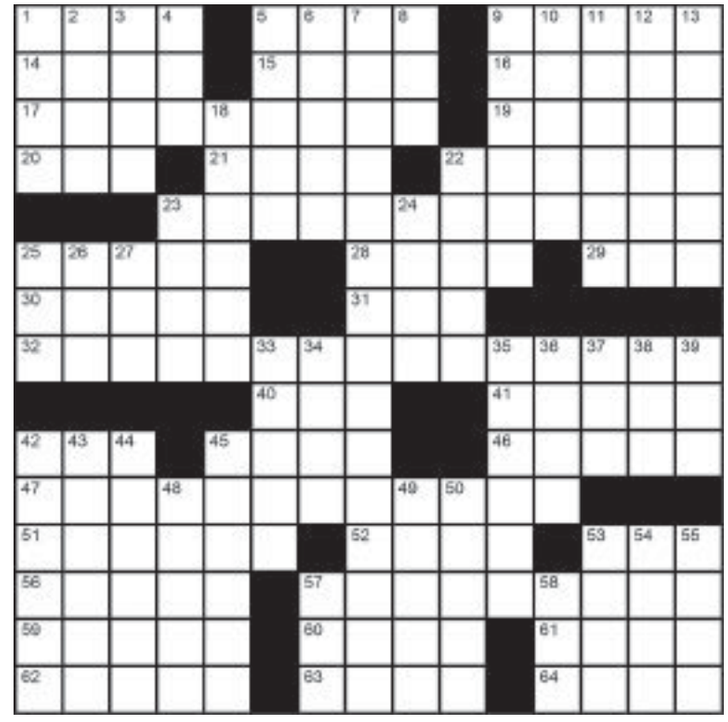
Ingredients
- 8 1/2 cups water
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 cup dried yellow split peas
- 1 Tbsp freshly grated ginger
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 Tbsp toasted pumpkin seeds

Directions
1. Place a large sauce pan over medium heat and fill with 1/2 cup water and onion, allow to cook until onions are translucent. Add ginger and simmer for 2 minutes. Add remaining 8 cups of water, sweet potato and peas to pot and bring to a boil.
2. After a few minutes, reduce the temperature and cover soup. Allow to simmer for 1 hour, or until the sweet potatoes and tender.
3. In that same bowl, toss your shrimp with the other half of the marinade. When the broccoli has been in the oven for 10 minutes, take out the sheets, turn the broccoli over and add the shrimp evenly across the two sheets. Put it all back in the oven for another 10 minutes.
4. Allow to soup to simmer last 10 minutes uncovered. Working in batches, put soup in a food processor and purée. Garnish with pumpkin seeds or sunflower seeds.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. "__ Is Christmas": Festive tune by #59-Across
5. Ancient's 1601
9. Monastery boss
14. Comical "Ouches!"
15. Egg: French
16. Bellows
17. The __, "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" (1989) family
19. 'Madame' of chemistry
20. Canuck prov.
21. Carried
22. Brightly-plumed bird
23. "Glory to the newborn King!" exclaimers: 2 wds.
25. Eternal City's ancient inhabitant
28. Lively
29. Socialite's 'born'
30. Moon shape, e.g.
31. Indonesia's __ Islands
32. When many might still be shopping for Christmas gifts: 4 wds.
40. "__ _ little teapot..."
41. Raised flatlands
42. Sit-ups targets
45. Util. bill
46. Friends, slangly
47. NORAD service monitoring the progress of Rudolph and the gang on Christmas eve: 2 wds.
51. Baking... All-purpose and multigrain
52. Canadian rocker Mr. Kroeger
53. Gunk
56. Decorate
57. "We Three Kings of Orient Are"... "Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying / Sealed in the _-_ tomb."
59. Canadian singer/songwriter Ms. McNeil
60. Canadian actor Mr. Cronyn
61. Tilled
62. Be popular on Twitter
63. Mail org. in The States
64. Hubbubs

DOWN
1. "Is that for here or __?" (Fast food query)
2. Highway honker
3. "Don't know __ __ matters, but..."
4. Leaky balloon sound effect
5. Communicating cow
6. __ Falls (High waterfall on Vancouver Island)
7. "You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch"... "You're as __ __ __ / You're as charming as an eel..."
8. Perhaps-es
9. Esoteric
10. Old 'town' in France
11. Like the wilderness
12. Baltimore baseball player
13. Dangerous flying bug
18. Wherefrom
22. Bit of drumming in "The Little Drummer Boy": 2 wds.
23. Jumble
24. Pub game prop
25. TV brand
26. Christmas dinner fragment
27. Converged
33. Lively rhythms
34. Canadian's continental neighbour, briefly
35. Hold back
36. Not ever, poetically
37. Employ
38. Dance style
39. 'Count' suffix
42. Of equal quickness: 2 wds.
43. Town in southern Manitoba named after one of Norse deity Odin's sons
44. Alarm clock button
45. Made money
48. Burial shroud city in Italy
49. Eat loudly
50. Surnamesakes of Orson Welles' most famous role
53. Fine
54. Butter substitute
55. Gambler's chances
57. Moo __ pork (Takeout dish)
58. "__-ching!"

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
You need to make a bold decision and choose between one approach or another. The only danger is that your emotions will guide you instead of reason. Think before you act.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
It's not a good time for taking risks, so don't be tempted to gamble, even if the odds are in your favour. Travel plans, too, are likely to be disrupted, so unless you must be on the move it might be wise to stay at home.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
You may go over the top if you think you are being cheated out of what you deserve. Before you start firing off accusations make sure you've got the evidence to back them up.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
An emotional looking full moon in your sign over the next 48 hours means you can't trust your feelings. Refuse to get upset no matter the provocation. How you react matters.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Something will disrupt your schedule. But why should that worry you? Relax. Slow down. Take it easy for a while. Save your energy for a time when you can make things happen.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
The current cosmic set-up is more than a little misleading, so don't jump to conclusions and don't launch into a tirade against someone you think does not appreciate you. They'll soon be singing your praises.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Making changes should be easy, but because the current full moon cuts across such an important axis of your chart you must make sure it's what you really want. You won't be able to change back again later.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
There is no point trying to keep feelings to yourself because you won't be able to. Be open about the way that you feel. If you bottle up your emotions they could explode later.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
If someone is giving you a hard time, remove yourself from their presence before you do something that will make matters worse. Don't put up with immature behaviour.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Everything that needs to happen will happen when the time is right. Others will be rushing here, there and everywhere in an effort to get on top of things, but you don't have to.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
This is a time more for thinking than for doing, so resist the urge to start something new and instead of wasting time on trivial and frivolous people, spend some quality time with your thoughts.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
You may want to end a relationship but first try looking forward and asking yourself if you may later decide that you were too hasty. Full moons can play all sorts of tricks on people.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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6		4	3		8	1		
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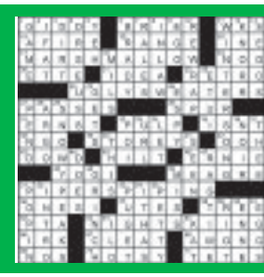

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3	9	8	6	5	1	7	4	2
7	4	2	3	9	8	6	5	1
5	1	6	4	2	7	8	3	9

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